

REMARKS

Claims 1, 7-10, 12, and 41-43 are pending. Claim 1 has been amended. Claims 8-9 have been canceled. No new matter has been added.

CLAIM REJECTIONS

Rejection of claims under 35. U.S.C. §103(a)

The Examiner has maintained his previous rejections of claims 1, 7-10, 12 and 41-43 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 1,914,736 to Coutu ("Coutu") in view of U.S. Patent No. 1,532,195 to Morrison ("Morrison"). Claims 1 and 41 are independent.

Applicant has discovered a flexible joint assembly including a first pivot joint and second pivot joint, each including a retaining ring compressing a seal by threadably connecting to a surface of the socket adjacent to the central fluid conductor and the ball. The unitary central fluid conductor couples a first ball and a second ball. See claims 1 and 41.

As acknowledged by the Examiner, "Coutu, by itself, does not disclose or teach the retaining ring 8 threadably connecting to a surface of the socket *adjacent to the central fluid conductor* (i.e., on an inner surface of the socket)" (emphasis added by the Examiner). See page 3-4 of the Office Action. The Examiner contends that "the structure taught by Coutu allows connection between balls 13 and 13a via connecting portions 14, 14a to create a 'central fluid conductor that couples a first ball and a second ball' as recited in the claims." See page 3 of the Office Action.

Coutu does not teach or suggest a unitary central fluid conductor that couples to a first ball and a second ball. There is no such suggestion or motivation in Coutu. Indeed, Coutu describes that nipple 14 is configured to "receive the part to be connected or coupled by means of the union" (page 2, lines 1-2 of Coutu). The only suggestion in Coutu of a device having two ball and socket joints can be found in Figures 1 and 2, where there is **no** unitary central fluid connector. Coutu does not provide any motivation to use such a structure.

The Examiner maintains that "[i]n view of the teachings of Morrison set forth in the previous rejection, however, one of ordinary skill in the art would recognize the obvious equivalence of connecting the retaining ring on the outer or inner surfaces of the socket." However, there is no motivation in Morrison or Coutu to include a retaining ring that threadably connects to a surface of the socket adjacent to the central fluid connector. Both Morrison and Coutu teach a nut (8, Fig. 2 of Coutu) or collar (12, Fig. 1 of Morrison) that threadably connects to a surface opposite a fluid connector. There is no suggestion or motivation in Morrison or Coutu to modify the retaining ring.

Therefore, neither Coutu nor Morrison, alone or in combination, teach or suggest a flexible joint assembly for conducting a fluid as recited in claim 1 or 41. Accordingly, claims 1 and 41, and claims that depend therefrom are patentable over the above-cited references. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the pending rejections. Applicant believe that the claims now pending are in condition for allowance.

Should any fees be required by the present Reply, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge Deposit Account **19-4293**.

If, for any reason, a telephonic conference with the Applicant would be helpful in expediting prosecution of the instant application, the Examiner is invited to call Applicant's Attorney at the telephone number provided below.

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